

D/2-8 Family-

It has been another busy month. The company continues to stay very busy and time is flying. The soldiers continue to do great work and morale is very high. Highlights for the month include the completion of our first major humanitarian assistance project and reestablishing contact with a town that has been outside the reach of coalition and Iraqi forces due to its remote location.

Our first successful major humanitarian assistance project has been the opening of the Food Distribution Center of Diyara. It provides a centralized location for a subsidized grocery store and will greatly improve the standards of life for the 150 households of the greater Diyara area. While the intent of the food distribution center is to provide low cost staple foods such as rice, sugar, and flour, it has had an impact far exceeding its planned function. Several months ago, the lifeblood of Diyara was its shop district. This came to an abrupt end when 2 suicide bombers destroyed the shops with vehicle-borne bombs. The food distribution center has provided a vital anchor and central location for the shopkeepers to continue business, and within just a week of the food center's opening, many small shops have opened around it. The streets and buildings around the food center are now prime real estate for businesses due to the regular draw of customers that the food center provides. There are now small produce markets, convenience stores, and even a barber shop in the town square. This is all possible because of the ground work laid by the Iraqi and US Army. Without the safety and stability provided by the efforts of the IA and the soldiers of D Co, no humanitarian assistance project would be possible. The people of Diyara extend their gratitude to the coalition forces every time we interact and continue to be some of the most genuine and friendly people that I have had the privilege of working with in Iraq. Diyara is a great example of what is possible during this critical stage of transition to the new Iraqi government, and this project is what I hope to be the first of many.

Not as far along in the rebuilding process is the town of al Haaq. Our second highlight of the past month has been reestablishing contact with this remote town. Due to its location and how bad the roads and infrastructure are, the town of al Haaq has been largely left behind. The IA and D Co are doing everything we can to change this, and reestablishing contact is the first step of this process. Our aim during this time period will be to build relationships with the people of the town and assess and prioritize the needs of the town. It is a slow process, but one that moves forward every day. During our first visit, we built a "yellow pages" of al Haaq, visited with the town elders, made assessments of things such as quality of the water supply and power grid, and the IA handed out food. Iraqi flags, comic books, and soccer balls were a hit with the kids, and within a few minutes of entering the town we were mobbed by happy and excited Iraqi children. It is my sincere hope and aim that the security that the D Co and Iraqi soldiers provide will be the starting point for a better life for the residents of al Haaq.

Congratulations to the following soldiers:

SFC Pizzi (1st PLT): Promoted to Sergeant First Class

SGT Aubuchon(1st PLT): Promoted to Sergeant

SGT Vaughn (HQ PLT): Nominated for 2-8 Hero of the week for taking charge of a difficult night recovery operation.

SSG Schumacher (HQ PLT): Nominated for 2-8 Hero of the week for outstanding work as both the D Co Fire Support Officer *and* Fire Support NCO.

SGT Brown (2nd PLT): Nominated and won 2-8 Hero of the Week for exceptional performance beyond the call of duty during a quick reaction force mission.

SGT Muriel (3rd PLT): Nominated and won 2-8 Hero of the Week for exemplary performance as the team leader for the company's lead element during a raid that resulted in the capture of 2 insurgents.



Above: Ribbon cutting ceremony for the Diyara Food Distribution Center



Above: Iraqi Army soldiers and children from al Haaq.

CPT Benjamin Simms
D/2-8 IN, Commanding